GUIDE TO THE USE OF THE EH14 SARAKATSANI FILE

[The Sarakatsani are a group of Greek-speaking nomadic pastoralists living in northern Greece, primarily in the provinces of Epirus, Thessaly, Macedonia and Thrace. Additional scattered communities of Sarakatsani are also to be found in the northern part of the Peloponnese as well as in Euboea. Population estimates range from 80,000 (1: Campbell, p. 1) to 90,000-110,000 (3: Kabbadias, p. 28). The problem of ethnic origins has never been clearly settled, although many theories have been presented. In 1925 Carsten Hoeg, a Danish linguistic scholar, concluded after a study of the Sarakatsani language that these shepherds are the descendants of primitive pastoral tribes, which he believes must always have existed in this part of Greece from pre-classical times (1: Campbell, p. 3). This theory was strongly disputed by a number of Rumanian writers, of whom Theodor Capidan is best known. Capidan and his followers claimed that far from being the descendants of ancient Greek tribesmen [The Sarakatsani] were not Greeks at all but Rumanian Koutsovlachs who in comparatively recent times had become hellenized (1: Campbell, pp. 3-4). In comparatively recent times D. Georgakas has proposed that the Sarakatsani are descended from a group of sedentary Greek peasants who at some period in the 14th century sought refuge in the mountains and eventually adopted pastoral nomadism. This theory is generally supported by Kabbadias (see source 3: Kabbadias, this file).

Every year from May to November the Sarakatsani graze their herds of sheep and to some extent goats on the higher slopes of the mountains (3000 to 6000 feet); for the remainder of the year they return to the coastal plains where they live in close but not necessarily friendly proximity to the Greek villagers. Because of the large number of animals involved, herd management requires the labors of four or five able-bodied men, a factor which determines the size of the cooperative enterprise known as the stani. This group is generally composed of close kinsmen. Kabbadias' term Tseligato, defined as an economic cooperative at the core of which is an economically powerful extended family, and to which are usually attached other conjugal or extended families of lower economic status which may or may not be related to the core family either collaterally or affinally, and Campbell's stani seem to be basically the same social group. Kabbadias' own definition of stani, however, does differ somewhat from that of Campbell. The stani, says Kabbadias, is simply the locale where pastoral activities take place, and this term is used commonly by all pastoral groups in Greece.

Kinship among the Sarakatsani is reckoned bilaterally, with only a slightly greater importance being given to agnatic kin. Kindred recognize as members all those who are related to them through common great grandparents or grandparents. On the other hand the family represents a stable solidary corporate group of kinsmen. Each family member owes ethical obligations to every other member. To consanguinal

kinsmen these obligations are qualified by the demands of family solidarity, while to affinal kinsmen they exist only by virtue of kinship linkage. Persons unrelated to the kin group, for example strangers, are treated with distrust. Concomitant with the strong feelings of family solidarity and obligations are those of honor, pride and strength which guide the Sarakatsani in their communal life.

The Sarakatsani file consists of three sources, two in English (1: Campbell and 2: Fermor) and one (3: Kabbadias) a translation from the French. 1: Campbell is a socio-functional study of the moral and social values of a community of Sarakatsani living in central Zagori (Epirus province). The data in this source are primarily related to kinship institutions, family structure, patronage, prestige, and religious beliefs. 2: Fermor is a popularized account of the author's experiences with the Sarakatsani. Most of the material in the source is related to a wedding festival at the village of Sikarayia which the author attended, although there are also miscellaneous bits of information on foods, dress, spirits and demons, omens, etc. 3: Kabbadias is probably the best source in this file for a well-rounded ethnographic study of the Sarakatsani as a whole. Although the author's description of his methodology leaves much to be desired and his deviations into rather lengthy theoretical discussions is at times aggravating to the researcher interested in

factual ethnographic data, the bulk of the source, nevertheless, is excellent for comparative research purposes. Major topics discussed are: adaptation to the natural environment, technology, social organization, the economic systems, law, magic and religion, and a synthesis of the data concerning culture and society. This source, in conjunction with 1: Campbell, provides a fairly well-rounded coverage of Sarakatsani ethnography.]

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